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RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

December 2001

Warring with the Coverage of War

Dissent Disappears from Media Coverage

DANNY SCHECHTER

We have all been here before. Watching our country go to war, with the mainstream media enlisted as a megaphone for official views and sanitized news. It was like that in Vietnam, in the Gulf, and now, with a significant difference, in Afghanistan. The difference is that today—despite new technologies, hundreds of new channels and the diverse views available through the internet—the situation is worse.

Worse, in part because journalists have effectively been barred from the battlefields, and because most media institutions have confused jingoism with journalism. American flags fly in the lapels of newscasters and in the graphics on news sets, masking their uncritical analyses in patriotic symbols. The voices of dissent are mostly absent, as the *New York Times* discovered almost two months after the war began.

A Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) survey of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* op-ed pages for the three weeks following the attacks (9/12/01 - 10/2/01) found that “columns calling for or assuming a military response to the attacks were given a great deal of space, while opinions urging diplomatic and international law approaches as an alternative to military action were nearly non-existent. A total of 44 columns in the *Times* and *Post* clearly stressed a military response, against only two col-

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



umns stressing non-military solutions.”

In addition, both op-ed pages showed a striking gender imbalance. Of the 107 op-ed writers at the *Post*, only seven were women. Proportionally, the *Times* did slightly better, with eight female writers out of 79. This is especially ironic in a war against a Taliban condemned for its treatment of women.

The media role in this crisis needs to be understood before it can be challenged. What is striking about this period is the penetration of the truly worldwide web, and the emergence of independent media centers and many independent media organizations.

Marriage of Media and Military

Understand at the outset that TV News thrives on the excitement, challenge and budgets that accompany the coverage of war. I wrote about this media context in the Electronpress.com edition of my book *News Dissector*.

While war unleashes devastation and death on people, it delivers ratings and brings life to television. War is often the “big story” (when sex isn’t), a defining moment for

many journalists. It’s the story that permits news departments to mobilize their “troops”—that’s what ABC called employees when I worked there—and show off their hi-tech deployments. Many reporters who “make it” to the top do so because of war reporting. Ask Peter Arnett, Cristianne Amanpour or even Peter Jennings—no disrespect intended—if being under fire helped or hurt their careers. The answer is obvious. Less obvious is the relationship between our bloated defense budget and war coverage. The Pentagon manipulates TV’s military boosterism to hype adventures,

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secure appropriations and sell weaponry.

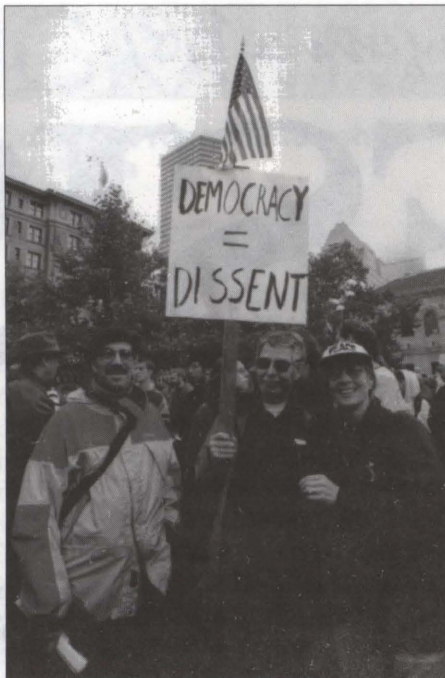
War correspondents have traditionally been top bananas in the food chain of journalism, at least in the days when networks covered the world, not just US interventions in it. It's an assignment many crave but few get, a job where guts can be leveraged into glory—and, more importantly, upward mobility. Being amidst the land mines can be a path to media gold mines. That's the upside. The downside is really down: the "death thing," in post-modernist jargon. It is dangerous physically for local war-watchers as well as foreign crews stumbling into war zones with inadequate preparation. The BBC now trains staffers in survival skills and risk management. Its trainer told me that news organizations share responsibility for media casualties by not teaching safety practices.

Phillip Knightly, the author *The First Casualty*, the definitive history on war correspondents, shows that in every war, truth is a greater casualty than the journalist body count. He offers a suggestion for saving lives by taking the romance out of the adventurism that accompanies military reporting. Knightly suggests newspapers simply stop using bylines with war reports and TV stations drop the endless stand-ups. "When they do that," he says, "see how few journalists clamor to cover wars."

Peace Journalism

Knightly was one of the participants in a four-day course outside London over Labor Day weekend a few years back. The conference taught other ways to cover conflicts and strategies to package peace journalism as a sexier option than war journalism. Unlike a similar conference here that would likely attract academics, this one drew working journalists, correspondents and producers. As TV journalism fights an uphill battle against *infotainment* formats, it was encouraging to find professionals struggling to report conflicts honestly, compassionately and responsibly.

The first goal was recognition of the "binary fallacy," what conflict resolution guru Johann Galtung calls a "bipolar disorder" that leads news people to follow the same template over and over, simplifying armed conflicts into battles between only two parties with no attention given to underlying political factors, multiple causes, possible compromises or impacts on civilians.



Dissent is valued at a rally in Boston, October 14, 2001. Photo by Ellen Shub

The language used to describe conflict likewise fuels it by constructing TV "realities" anchored in good versus evil, light versus dark, self versus other. Argues Galtung, "journalism does not only legitimize violence but is violent in and of itself" by its continuing failure to pay attention to people's grievances or strategies for peaceful outcomes. Bombings are reported vividly; peace processes, particularly among non-state players, are ignored.

The workshop turned to teaching skills of deconstruction and reconstruction. Stories about "evil billionaire terrorist mastermind" Osama bin Laden were dissected for blatant biases, inadequate sourcing and orchestrated assumptions that missiles were the only sensible response. Likewise, TV reports on the Middle East and Kosovo were analyzed as superficial, distorted and context-free. Going beyond the media critique, efforts were made to show how the same story could be reworked. Separate teams came up with new scripts and voice-overs—all under "deadline" pressure. A truck with edit gear arrived, permitting producers and wannabe "correspondents" to re-edit, producing tapes that showed how easily a thoughtful approach could lead to more informative peace-oriented reporting.

In all cases, the stories reflected traditional values of accuracy, fairness and balance on all sides—including those usually left out. The final products were somewhat amateurish, but improved upon actually

broadcast originals. A similar exercise with "two-ways," where studio presenters (anchors) interview reporters live, showed how more conscious journalists could broaden the range of discourse.

Could any of these approaches be adopted here? Of course—if the will existed. The BBC's Sue Lloyd Roberts showed her stories from Burma and Tibet shot on camcorders, offering the kind of sensitive-but-tough reporting on human rights so conspicuously absent on our TV. She confided that British broadcasting is turning away from her approach towards softer domestic stories in the US mold. Jake Lynch of SKY News showed how his coverage of the Irish troubles focused on initiatives by non-sectarian groups who played key behind-the-scenes roles in the peace process. South Africa's effort to promote reconciliation through media was offered as another model.

A CNN bureau chief present at a discussion of these issues claimed that his organization fields 65 peace correspondents. One look at how CNN reported the Gulf War, and how it is covering the war today, shows the gap in understanding in



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For information and grant guidelines, write to: Resist, 259 Elm St., Suite 201
Somerville, MA 02144
www.resistinc.org; resistinc@igc.org

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RESIST Staff: Robin Carton
Becca Howes-Mischel
Carol Schachet

RESIST Volunteer: Jean Smith

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the trenches of network journalism. George Orwell explained it years ago, predicting an age of news speak, manipulated language and group think. For the mainstream, now a mudstream, peace is war and war peace.

Gulf War Coverage

Media coverage of the Gulf War years ago was probably the biggest, most expensive, and most sustained undertaking in the history of the television news divisions. It was a marathon, a news-athon that hooked us into a state of addictive anxiety where we stayed tuned in to saturation updates without end. Media coverage rallied the country behind the war while promoting the illusion that what we were watching in our living rooms was what was happening in the deserts of Arabia.

The coverage was so one-sided and so well managed that the Administration would sweep the "Gulfies" if such an award were ever created to honor the media work in this conflict. Michael Deaver, President Reagan's PR honcho, was ecstatic about its impact, contending, "If you were to hire a public relations firm to do the media relations for an international event, it couldn't be done any better than this is being done." Hodding Carter, President Jimmy Carter's former chief flack, seconded the emotion: "If I were the government, I'd be paying the press for the coverage it's getting."

Yet the press—and this was a television story above all else—did not have to be paid. Pete Williams, the man who "handled" the media for the Pentagon, put his finger on this greatest accomplishment before hostilities erupted. "The reporting has been largely a recitation of what Administration people have said, or an extension of it."

But let's scratch deeper. Was this a case of meanies in the military manipulating the messengers of the media? No way. Listen to Michael Massing in the *Columbia Journalism Review*: "access was not really the issue. Yes the pools, the escorts, the clearance procedures were all terribly burdensome, but greater openness would not necessarily have produced better coverage." For him, what we lacked were not freer reporters in the field but more digging into the real reasons for the war, fewer "Scud Studs," as NBC's Arthur Kent was called, and more I. F. Stones to burrow in the bowels of Official Washington to get at the story behind the story. (Kent himself was later fired by NBC, sued the network, won, and

then wrote a book denouncing the manipulation of news.)

The critics of the war coverage now include many of the people upon whom we relied for information. CNN's Bernard Shaw told a university conference that the American people "never got the whole story." Veteran *New York Times* war reporter Malcolm Browne, disgusted with the news management, said that the reporting on this war spelled an end of war reporting as we have known it. *Newsday* quoted one correspondent as saying: "The line between me and a government contractor is pretty thin."

Critiques and Alternatives

That was then. What about now? Today I am writing every day about the coverage of this war on mediachannel.org. I watch the TV coverage, skim as many newspapers as I can and read the reporting of news outlets in other countries to try to understand the perspectives of other cultures, and frankly to find information and analysis that are missing in most US media accounts. The British press, which has many problems of its own, has been far more analytical, detached and investigative than the media outlets most Americans rely on for their news and information.

In this exercise, still underway at this writing, I identify 10 key problems with the coverage, although I must say that there is also good reporting.

Here's what's missing:

1. Lack of historical context
2. Lack of cultural analysis
3. Lack of access to decision makers
4. Lack of access to the battlefields
5. Lack of coverage of US policy and interests in the region

Add to that (6) an absence of critical perspectives, (7) refusal to adequately cover dissent in the US and around the world, (8) refusal for the most part to hear from voices in the region, (9) refusal to give adequate air time to NGO groups which have been critical of the Pentagon's exploitative use of humanitarian food delivery to focus attention away from the effects of the bombing, and finally (10) virtually no attention paid to alternatives to violence, international law, or how the conflict might be resolved or will be resolved.

Okay, that's a critique. What's the alternative? We have all read some of the analysis on the left, including the debates between Christopher Hitchens and Noam

Chomsky over whether left responses are insensitive to the victims of the attacks in New York and Washington, and whether the war is just or not. They will continue but you rarely find issues like this explored in the op-ed pages of most media outlets. We should point out that many radical outlets are also closed to dissenting perspectives from whatever political line is in command. Some critics confuse patriotism with fascism, attacking the American people rather than engaging them in the many critical concerns. The left needs to confront ways in which it marginalizes itself, often substituting slogans for substantive debate.

News Sources

Only a few national outlets give voice to the types of perspectives I am calling for. On TV, two new channels, FreeSpeech TV and World Links are available on satellite stations. There are 500 public access channels nationwide, some of which carry shows like Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now*. While the Pacifica Network is divided and on the edge of implosion, they still offer dissenting voices unheard elsewhere.

Indy media videos and websites reach audiences worldwide but lack the means of promotion and marketing along with most of progressive media. You can find many of them on sites like Fair.org, Alternet.org and Zmag.org, along with hundreds of other web sites which offer dissenting views. [Mediachannel.org](http://mediachannel.org) now has 820 affiliates easily accessible through its site as well as a Global News Index with 1000 links. The company's new Globalvision News Network (www.gvnewsnet.com), available through [mediachannel](http://mediachannel.org), brings perspectives from all over the world, a form of inside-out journalism that is also missing in most of our media.

Love the media or hate it, we all have a responsibility for our own media choices. We also need to see much media coverage as a problem to be examined and ultimately confronted. As my old friend Scoop Nisker used to say on San Francisco radio, "If you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own."

Danny Schechter is the executive producer of Globalvision, Inc. (globalvision.org) and the author of News Dissector (Akashic Books and electronpress.com) and the More You Watch The Less You Know (Seven Stories Press).

True Democracy & the War on Dissent

Indymedia Notes

JONATHAN LAWSON, SUSAN GLEASON & DANIEL HANNAH

The social and political climate of post-September 11 America has seen intense pressures for citizens to conform to particular forms of patriotism. Pressures have flowed from the federal government's repeated (and rather anti-democratic) calls for unquestioning unity, and have been broadcast and amplified by a national media willing to toe the official line rather than report voices of dissent.

At the same time, however, alternative media voices proliferate via small newsletters and magazines, radio and television production, and the Internet. Using the Internet as an organizing tool, a distribution network and a publishing platform, the Independent Media Center network continues to grow in size and exposure as more progressive organizations and ordinary folks look to its websites for media alternatives.

The IMC's unique "open publishing" system, by which independent journalists publish their own materials directly to the web, makes browsing the IMC sites a mixed bag of thoughtful analyses, activist dispatches, on-the-street news items, rants and reprinted media from unknown publications or organizations. Without a central editorial authority dispatching reporters (or fact-checking stories), readers are obliged to think critically as they are reading—to allow a story to provoke further research, further reading, and perhaps further writing.

Stifling Dissent

Even before the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and before the wave of reactionary law enforcement measures rammed through Congress in the weeks which followed, critics of power politics in the US understood that the Bush administration was on the lookout for aggressive strategies to promote its neoliberal economic agenda (inherited from the Clinton administration) while stifling domestic unrest.

In *The Nation* (dated September 17; in fact, the last issue published before September 11), for example, Edward Said wrote that "Bush, Blair and their feeble partners

prepare their citizens for an indeterminate war against Islamic terrorism, rogue states and the rest," an example of what he termed "diversions from the social and economic disentitlements occurring in reality." At home, Said observed, orthodox catchphrases of globalization such as 'free trade,' 'privatization' and so forth, are repeated over and again "not as they sometimes seem to be—as instigations for debate—but quite the opposite, to stifle, preempt and crush dissent."

Said's unfortunately prescient words were quickly forgotten in the uncritical patriotic fervor imposed after September 11, as forces within the Bush administration rushed to link a cornucopia of pet projects to its newly justified anti-terrorist quest. Before bombs began to fall in Afghanistan, some of the most shameless and morally bankrupt rhetoric came from US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, who asserted that anti-globalization protesters have "intellectual connections" with terrorists, and that pursuing free trade was an important way to combat global terrorism.

New, expanded definitions of terrorism were part of a colossal package of law enforcement legislation rushed through Congress without debate or other regular processes. The Patriot Act, passed into law in late October, is 342 pages long. Many controversial provisions expanding police and judicial power were likely part of Justice Department and FBI wish lists long before the bill's introduction as a timely anti-terrorist measure. The Electronic Frontier Foundation (www.eff.org) has made a detailed initial analysis of the act and its potential effects on electronic media.

Reflecting on the increasing pressure government forces have placed on anti-globalization demonstrators since the Seattle WTO ministerial, many activist groups have charged that the real purpose of this legislation is to criminalize organized protest, through expanded definitions of terrorism and surveillance authority. Because of our relationship with the anti-globalization and environmentalist activist movements, and because we have already had encounters with police and federal law enforcement agencies, Indymedia volunteers are also taking a hard look at these new laws.

Most IMC volunteers would probably describe themselves as activists as well as journalists. Credentialed IMC journalists working in the midst of street protests have relied on their "press" badges to distinguish themselves from protesters, although this has not stopped them from getting gassed, pepper-sprayed, struck and arrested by police in Seattle and elsewhere.

Last April, while tens of thousands protested against the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Quebec City and elsewhere across the hemisphere, FBI and Secret Service agents served the Seattle IMC with a court order demanding the handover of Internet server logs. The order would have given the US government access to over 1.25 million IP addresses of independent journalists, activists and readers who visited Indymedia sites during the eventful weekend. The government's justification for the burdensome order—claiming that classified information regarding Bush's travel itinerary had been posted to an IMC site—later turned out to be false. As the IMC prepared to fight the order in court two months later, the government quietly dropped the matter.

Activism and the Current Media Landscape

In recent months, the Seattle IMC has covered numerous local or regional stories chronicling government crackdowns or violations of civil liberties. Some of these have directly resulted from the new anti-terrorist fervor in law enforcement: nonviolent School of the Americas Watch organizers and anti-globalization protesters have been denied entry into Canada; residents and supporters of Seattle's Somali community protested the government shutdown of several Somali-owned businesses, only one of which was allegedly suspected of having links to international terrorists. In a ruling which showed remarkable contempt for the First Amendment, a Seattle judge found constitutional the "no-protest zones" the government created during the WTO to foil large demonstrations.

Stories like these get a much different spin in the corporate media, where restrictions on subject matter and actual debate

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have increased since September 11.

The mainstream press, more often than not, takes administration rhetoric at face value, relying on official sources to describe current events, and allowing its claims to go unchallenged. As recently reported by the watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (www.fair.org), mainstream networks CNN and FOX instituted official wartime policies requiring journalists to downplay reports of Afghan civilian casualties. Reporting on domestic approval of the US bombing, NPR's Cokie Roberts was asked by the host whether there were dissenting views among the public. Her reply: "None that matter."

In its public addresses, the Bush Administration has forgone thoughtful analysis of complex issues, substituting "non-negotiable" policies and simplistic explanations. The extent to which current statements have been dumbed-down is revealed by a comparison between recent rhetoric and Reagan's well-known "evil empire" speech—the iconic representation of cartoonish simplicity—yet written for a higher 'grade level' than Bush's intended audience.

Reporting on anti-war sentiment, including large demonstrations, is systematically marginalized by most mainstream print media as well. When 65,000 demonstrators marched in Washington D.C. on October 26th, the *Washington Post* ran one photo—depicting a lone angry counter-protester. When acknowledged in written reports, large demonstrations are interpreted as threats to public safety, and often described using prejudicial and unwarranted language. Two years afterwards, it is common for the *Seattle Times* to report as fact wildly inaccurate fantasies about the "riots" and "widespread property destruction" which accompanied WTO protests.

Through ceaseless repetition, this way of marginalizing protest movements has affected even the alternative press. In Seattle, both major alternative weeklies devoted articles to diminishing recent anti-war protests as unsophisticated, old-fashioned or muddled. In total, the current media and legislative landscape impede activists who find themselves always pre-defined by waves of negative propaganda.

What is to be Done?

Even as opinion polls show very high public regard for federal policies and acts

of war abroad, it also seems true that many people retain the intuition that they're being misled, that government spokespeople and mainstream media talking heads aren't always telling the whole story. During recent times of perceived national crisis, the homogeneity which generally marks corporate news media has taken a cartoonish turn. Dissenting views, outside of a very narrow range, are disallowed. Uncritical patriotism and ceaseless flag-waving are the marching orders, faithfully following Bush's stern pronouncement, "you're either with us, or you're with the terrorists."

All this fails to resonate with the perceptions, feelings and opinions of many Americans. These people are the natural audience for the many alternative media sources that are out there. Responding to this growing audience along with other independent media sources, Independent Media Centers continue working to produce and disseminate important stories and critical perspectives that are overlooked or purposefully ignored by the mainstream.

At the same time, we also encourage our readers and other activists to become more analytical consumers of the media, to develop mental tools that make it easier to see around the propaganda, to see how stories are shaped by ideological presuppositions, and to become articulate media critics, speaking about or publishing one's own critiques of the mainstream press.

Becoming more critical consumers of the news is crucial for all activists, and for democratic systems to truly function. Here are several guidelines for increasing media literacy skills, followed by some additional guidelines for media activists who choose to take up the Indymedia challenge and become the media! These guidelines draw from Ali Abunimah and Rania Masri's critique of Gulf War news coverage (in *Iraq Under Siege*, Anthony Arnone, ed.).

Media Literacy Guidelines

1. When reading, watching or listening to news media, become an "analyst." For every report, ask, "Whose voices are included, whose are excluded? What hidden presuppositions helped shape this story?"
2. Read widely. All news media are shaped by particular political, economic and ethical positions; get your news from multiple sources and read them comparatively and critically. Seek out noncommercial and international sources of information. For

those with Internet access, browsing the web makes this easy. Labor unions, NGOs and advocacy groups such as the Institute for Policy Studies or Public Citizen often post detailed news stories concerning specific issues.

3. Discuss your findings with others. As you develop your own good habits, share them with your friends and co-workers. Everyone discusses the news—use these discussions to sharpen your own thinking about the media we consume as well as to educate others.

Independent Journalist Guidelines

1. Stay awake. We are all affected by the propaganda pushed by corporate America—activists need to be vigilant in keeping themselves and each other alert. If you don't preach to the choir every once in a while, the choir won't learn the songs.
2. Learn the battlefield and choose your battles. None of us can read or listen to everything, or cover every story. Choose a topic or situation that interests you, and learn about it. As time goes by, you will become more expert in your chosen area, and readers will learn to trust your writing.
3. Communicate effectively. Write down your observations, make a radio or video piece. Whether you are writing a current events story, a media analysis article or an opinion piece, present facts as accurately as you can. If your piece contains movement jargon or comes across as a rant, readers may put less stock in what you have to say.
4. Develop networks. Make contact with other journalists, activists or organizations interested in the same issues. Support and advocate for independent media sources.
5. Be persistent. Make things happen. Submit your writings to independent media sources. Publish your articles, photos, video and audio pieces to any Indymedia site (look for the publish button on the front page). Once an article is posted to an IMC, it remains archived there—readers can search for your writings and link to them from elsewhere.

Jonathan Lawson, Susan Gleason and Daniel Hannah are journalists, educators and organizers at the Seattle Independent Media Center (seattle.indymedia.org), part of the global IMC network (www.indymedia.org). Seattle Independent Media Center received a grant from RESIST last year.

The New McCarthyism

Charges of Anti-Americanism are Anti-American

GEORGE MONBIOT

If satire died on the day Henry Kissinger received the Nobel Peace Prize, then last week its corpse was exhumed for a kicking. As head of the United Nations' peacekeeping department, [2001 prize winner] Kofi Annan failed to prevent the genocide in Rwanda or the massacre in Srebrenica. Now, as Secretary General, he appears to have interpreted the UN charter as generously as possible to allow the attack on Afghanistan to go ahead.

Among the other nominees for the prize was a group whose qualifications were rather more robust. Members of Women in Black have routinely risked their lives in the hope of preventing war. They have stayed in the homes of Palestinians being shelled by Israeli tanks and have confronted war criminals in the Balkans. They have stood silently while being abused and spat at during vigils all over the world. But now, in this looking glass world in which war is peace and peace is war, instead of winning the peace prize the Women in Black have been labeled potential terrorists by the FBI and threatened with a grand jury investigation.

They are in good company. Earlier this year the director of the FBI named the chaotic but harmless organizations Reclaim the Streets and Carnival Against Capitalism in the statement on terrorism he presented to the Senate. Now, partly as a result of his representations, the senate's new terrorism bill, like Britain's Terrorism Act 2000, redefines the crime so broadly that members of Greenpeace are in danger of being treated like members of Al-Qaeda. The Bush doctrine—if you're not with us, you're against us—is already being applied.

This government by syllogism makes no sense at all. Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda have challenged the US government; ergo anyone who challenges the government is a potential terrorist. That Bin Laden is, according to US officials, a "fascist" while the other groups are progressives is irrelevant: every public hand raised in objection will from now on be treated as a public hand raised in attack. Given that Osama Bin Laden is not a pro-



After September 11, people across the country, as at this gathering in Boston, expressed both grief for those who died and a commitment to civil liberties. Photo by Ellen Shub

gressive but is a millionaire, it would surely make more sense to round up and interrogate all millionaires.

Lumping Women in Black together with Al-Qaeda requires just a minor addition to the vocabulary: they have been jointly classified as "anti-American." This term, as used by everyone from Donald Rumsfeld and the *Daily Mail* to Tony Blair and several contributors to the *Guardian*, applies not only to those who hate Americans, but also to those who have challenged US foreign and defense objectives. Implicit in this denunciation is a demand for uncritical support, for a love of government more consonant with the codes of Tsarist Russia than with the ideals upon which the United States were founded.

The charge of "anti-Americanism" is itself profoundly anti-American. If the United States does not stand for freedom of thought and speech, for diversity and dissent, then we have been deceived as to the nature of the national project. Were the founding fathers to congregate today to discuss the principles enshrined in their declaration of independence, they would be denounced as "anti-American" and investigated as potential terrorists. Anti-American means today precisely what un-American meant in the 1950s. It is an instrument of dismissal, a means of excluding critics from rational discourse.

Under the new McCarthyism, this dismissal extends to anyone who seeks to pro-

mulgate a version of events other than that sanctioned by the US government. On September 20, President Bush told us that "this is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom." Two

weeks later, Colin Powell met the emir of Qatar, to request that progress, pluralism, tolerance and freedom be suppressed. Al-Jazeera is one of the few independent television stations in the Middle East, whose popularity is the result of its uncommon regard for freedom of speech. It is also the only station permitted to operate freely in Kabul: many of the images of the bombing of Afghanistan we've seen on TV were recorded by

its cameramen. Powell's request that it be squashed was a pre-emptive strike against freedom, which, he hoped, would prevent the world from seeing what was really happening once the bombing began.

If we are to preserve the progress, pluralism, tolerance and freedom which President Bush claims to be defending, then we must question everything we see and hear. Though we know that governments lie to us in wartime, most people seem to believe that this universal rule applies to every conflict except the current one. Many of those who now accept that babies were not thrown out of incubators in Kuwait, and that the Belgrano was fleeing when she was hit, are also prepared to believe everything we are being told about Afghanistan and the terrorism in the United States.

Democracy is sustained not by public trust but by public skepticism. Unless we are prepared to question, to expose, to challenge and to dissent, we conspire in the demise of the system for which our governments are supposed to be fighting. The true defenders of America are those who are now being told that they are anti-American.

George Monbiot is author of Captive State: the Corporate Takeover of Britain. This article is excerpted from the Guardian (10-16-2001) and appeared on Znet.org. George Monbiot's essays and articles are now online at <http://www.monbiot.com>.

Cutting Back on Checks and Balances

An ACLU Legislative Analysis of the USA Patriot Act

When President Bush signed the USA Patriot Act into law last week, he significantly boosted the government's law enforcement powers while continuing a trend to cut back on the checks and balances that Americans have traditionally relied on to protect individual liberty.

Following are highlights of the civil liberties implications of the USA Patriot Act, which was signed into law on October 26, by President Bush, as compiled by the ACLU.

Immigration

- The new law permits the detention of non-citizens facing deportation based merely on the Attorney General's certification that he has "reasonable grounds to believe" the non-citizen endangers national security. While immigration or criminal charges must be filed within seven days, these charges need not have anything to do with terrorism. They can be minor visa violations of the kind that normally would not result in detention at all. Non-citizens ordered removed on visa violations could be indefinitely detained if they are stateless, their country of origin refuses to accept them, or they are granted relief from deportation because they would be tortured if they were returned to their country of origin.

- For the first time, domestic groups can be labeled terrorist organizations, making membership or material support a deportable offense. Non-citizens could also be detained or deported for providing assistance to groups that are not designated as terrorist organizations at all, as long as activity of the group satisfies an extraordinarily broad definition of terrorism that covers virtually any violent activity. It would then fall on the non-citizen to prove that his or her assistance was not intended to further terrorism. Non-citizens who provide assistance to such groups—including paying membership dues—will run the risk of detention and deportation.

Wiretapping and Surveillance

- The USA Patriot Act allows the government to use its intelligence gathering power to circumvent the standard that must be met for criminal wiretaps. Intelligence

surveillance merely needs to be only for a "significant" purpose.

- The USA Patriot Act extends a very low threshold of proof for access to Internet communications that are far more revealing than numbers dialed on a phone. Under current law, a law enforcement agent can get a pen register or trap and trace order requiring the telephone company to reveal the numbers dialed to and from a particular phone. To get such an order, law enforcement must simply certify to a judge—who must grant the order—that the information to be obtained is "relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation." This is a very low level of proof, far less than probable cause.

- In allowing for "nationwide service" of pen register and trap and trace orders, the law further marginalizes the role of the judiciary. It authorizes what would be the equivalent of a blank warrant in the physical world: the court issues the order, and the law enforcement agent fills in the places to be searched.

- The Act also grants the FBI broad access in "intelligence" investigations to records about a person maintained by a business. The FBI need only certify to a court that it is conducting an intelligence investigation and that the records it seeks may be relevant.

Criminal Justice

- The law dramatically expands the use of secret searches. Normally, a person is notified when law enforcement conducts a search. The USA Patriot Act extends the authority of the government to request "secret searches" to every criminal case.

- The Act also allows for the broad sharing of sensitive information in criminal cases with intelligence agencies, including the CIA, the NSA, the INS and the Secret Service. It permits sharing of sensitive grand jury and wiretap information without judicial review or any safeguards regarding the future use or dissemination of such information.

These information-sharing authorizations and mandates effectively put the CIA back in the business of spying on Americans: Once the CIA makes clear the kind of

information it seeks, law enforcement agencies can use tools like wiretaps and intelligence searches to provide data to the CIA. In fact, the law specifically gives the Director of Central Intelligence—who heads the CIA—the power to identify domestic intelligence requirements.

- The law also creates a new crime of "domestic terrorism." The new offense threatens to transform protestors into terrorists if they engage in conduct that "involves acts dangerous to human life." Those who provide lodging or other assistance to these "domestic terrorists" could have their homes wiretapped and could be prosecuted.

Financial Privacy

- Under the new law, financial institutions are required to monitor daily financial transactions even more closely and to share information with other federal agencies, including foreign intelligence services such as the CIA. The law also allows law enforcement and intelligence agencies to get easy access to individual credit reports in secret. The law provides for no judicial review and does not mandate that law enforcement give the person whose records are being reviewed any notice.

Student Privacy

- The USA Patriot Act allows law enforcement officials to receive the student data collected for the purpose of statistical research under the National Education Statistics Act. The statistics act requires the government to collect a vast amount of identifiable student information and—until now—has required it to be held in the strictest confidence without exception. The USA Patriot Act, however, eliminates that protection and—while it requires a court order—allows law enforcement agencies to get access to private student information based on a mere certification that the records are relevant to an investigation.

This article is adapted with permission from the American Civil Liberties Union. For more information, visit their website at www.aclu.org.

GRANTS

During the past months we have witnessed increased restrictions of civil liberties, the bombing of Afghanistan, and the suppression of alternative perspectives. Resist's Emergency Grants Program has enabled groups to quickly mobilize in response to these issues.

Emergency grants of up to \$300 are available on an "as-needed" basis. These grants are designed to help groups respond immediately to unexpected organizing needs. While it is impossible to precisely define an emergency, these grants are generally given to provide support for demonstrations or other events arising from a political crisis. Emergency grants are *not* intended to provide a safety net for groups who have failed to adequately plan for their financial needs, or who have missed the regular funding deadline.

The Emergency Grant Application and Guidelines are available on Resist's website at www.resistinc.org. Unlike the regular application process, applicants may email their requests. A decision will be made within 48 hours (or less) of receipt of the request.

Resist has given numerous grants to organizations responding to the Sept 11th attacks and the subsequent military response. Some are listed below.

Columbia River Fellowship for Peace

PO Box 241
Husum, WA 98623

The Columbia River Fellowship (CRFP) serves a four-county area, encompassing both Oregon and Washington, in the rural mid-Columbia Gorge. The CRFP is dedicated to promoting peace and social justice at both the individual and community levels. They have previously sponsored public education programs and community forums on numerous social justice issues, as well as peace vigils.

Resist awarded CRFP an emergency grant for a community teach-in to help educate their community about the roots of the terrorist actions of 9/11 as well as an appropriate US reaction. The teach-in combined educational organizing with community-building activities.

Knoxville Area Coalition for Compassion, Justice & Peace

PO Box 379
Lake City, TN 37769

The Knoxville Area Coalition for Compassion, Justice and Peace formed in response to the terrorist attacks of Sept 11th as local activists came together to

form a group opposed to further militarization as the only such group in Knoxville. They have since held numerous public demonstrations, a weekly vigil, and are planning a University teach-in.

Resist awarded them an emergency grant to support their on-going demonstrations and provide childcare, a PA system, and materials to construct puppets for their street protests.

Massachusetts Women's Congress for Peace

c/o AFSC, 140 Pine Street
Florence, MA 01062

The Massachusetts Women's Congress for Peace was organized for Nov. 10th by the Northampton Committee to Lift the Sanctions on Iraq (a Resist grantee) and the Western Mass AFSC. The group emerged out of on-going weekly vigils for peace and justice. The Women's Congress was organized as a way to bring women together to raise a collective call for a just and peaceful solution.

Resist's emergency grant allows the Congress to function separately from its parent organizations. In part the Congress will allow women to join together to address the logical questions of forming an on-going statewide Peace Congress.

Utah Progressive Network (UpNet)

PO Box 52139
Salt Lake City, UT 84152; www.upnet.org

UpNet is a current Resist grantee which serves as a statewide, multi-issue coalition to unite progressive communities. They have been awarded an additional emergency grant to organize a series of public education forums to address specific aspects of the September 11 attacks.

The public forums will address civil liberties during the "war on terrorism" and US foreign policy. Given the location of the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UpNet is monitoring the impact of security measures on expressions of dissent, demanding accountability and protecting the rights of people to critique their government.

Join the Resist Pledge Program

We'd like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge.

Pledges account for over 30% of our income.

By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant-making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder along with your newsletter. We will keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded and the other work being done at Resist.

So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

Yes! I'll become a RESIST Pledge.

I'll send you my pledge of \$ _____ every month/quarter/six months/year (circle one).

- ☐ Enclosed is an initial pledge contribution of \$ _____.
☐ I can't join the pledge program now, but here's a contribution of \$ _____ to support your work.
☐ Please do not send me an acknowledgment letter.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Donations to Resist are tax-deductible.

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